

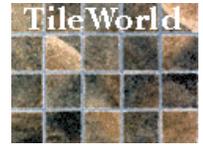


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### VISUAL ARTS: The ghost of rock 'n' roll

BY ELAINE WOLFF

09/02/2004



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### Two FotoSeptiembre exhibits idolize musicians in very different ways

**I**t wouldn't be possible to preview the Tom Wright photo exhibit because Wright is bringing the prints himself when he returns to town for the opening this week, the staff at Southwest School of Art & Craft said regretfully, intimating that this was to be expected of a free spirit from the '70s.

Wright, an alumni of England's Ealing Art College, participated in the restoration of Market Square, working extensively with Mi Tierra's Cortez family, and founded the photography department at SSAC. But most famously for his time, he extensively photographed his college mate Pete Townshend and the seminal English rock band the Who, as well as such 20th-century music legends as Rare Earth, the Eagles, and the Rolling Stones. His extensive collection resides permanently at the University of Texas at Austin's Center for American History, but for FotoSeptiembre SSAC is putting on what they call a "pastiche" of Wright's "unique life experiences."

The 75-plus works not only offer the opportunity to remember an era and individuals who shaped cornerstones of downtown San Antonio that we take for granted today, it should allow us to glimpse (or for some of us, relive) a time when rock 'n' roll stars seemed god-like, and infinitely bigger than their labels. The hair was long, the clothes were loud, and the groupies still believed it all might lead to some kind of revolution, or at least true love. Images from these times, familiar to us all, capture the harmonic convergence of unbridled creativity, male ego, popular and commercial adulation that allowed us to romanticize life on the road and stage as a new kind of outlaw life. That our fascination with it is far from over is attested to by the arrival in theaters this week of



**A trombonist practices in sepia-toned solitude in Walker Pickering's series Musicians, on view at Robot Art Gallery downtown.**

**Musicians:**  
**Photography by Walker Pickering**  
 9am-5pm Mon-Fri & by appt.  
 Through Sep 30  
 Free  
**Robot Art Gallery**  
 724 S. Alamo, Suite 3  
 476-8801

**Double Vision:**  
**Tom Wright Photographs**  
 9am-5pm Mon-Sat, 1  
 1am-4pm Sun  
 Sep 9-Oct 31  
 Opening reception 5:30-7:30pm Sep 9  
 Free  
**SSAC Navarro Campus**  
 300 Augusta  
 224-1848

*Festival Express*, "featuring never before seen footage of Janis Joplin, Grateful Dead, the Band." It should make a good pairing with the Wright exhibit.

If that's not enough vicarious music for you, contemporary photographer Walker Pickering has a show on view at Robot Art Gallery in Southtown that counters Wright's work in scale, tone, and perspective. This show comes early in Pickering's career, and he is still a self-conscious photographer, creating highly controlled portraits that fetishize the solitude of practice and dedication. The lighting and angles are often interesting, placing as much emphasis on the instruments as on the musicians. But the high level of orchestration (pun intended) and the sepia tones give the series an air of self-aggrandizement, as in the trombone player posed like Rodin's famous "Thinker." It calls to mind the way in which creativity has come to be thought of as a vocation more than a universal trait. Pickering, a musician himself, has nonetheless created a silent space in which you can almost hear the clarinet, violin, and horns. All he needs is a little of the raw, unpredictable energy Wright captured. •

*FotoSeptiembre exhibits open throughout the month of September. For more info, visit*

[www.safotofestival.com/fotoseptiembre-2004.html](http://www.safotofestival.com/fotoseptiembre-2004.html).

By **Elaine Wolff**



**For FotoSeptiembre, the Southwest School of Art & Craft is featuring the work of photographer (and the school's founding photography teacher) Tom Wright, who traveled extensively with the Who, documenting their rock 'n' roll life.**

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